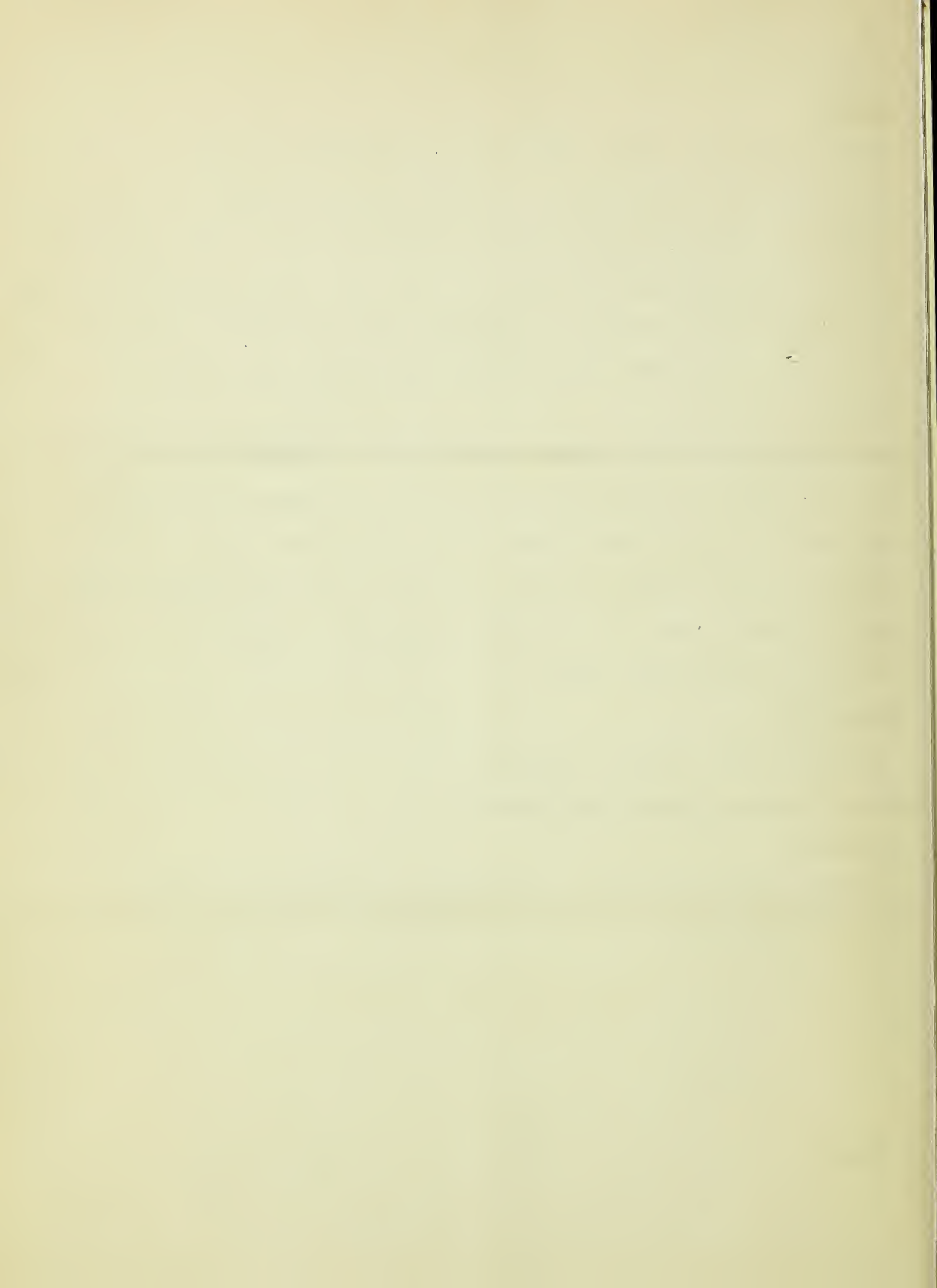


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F O R T U N E S   W A S H E D   A W A Y

"THE FALL OF CALAIS"

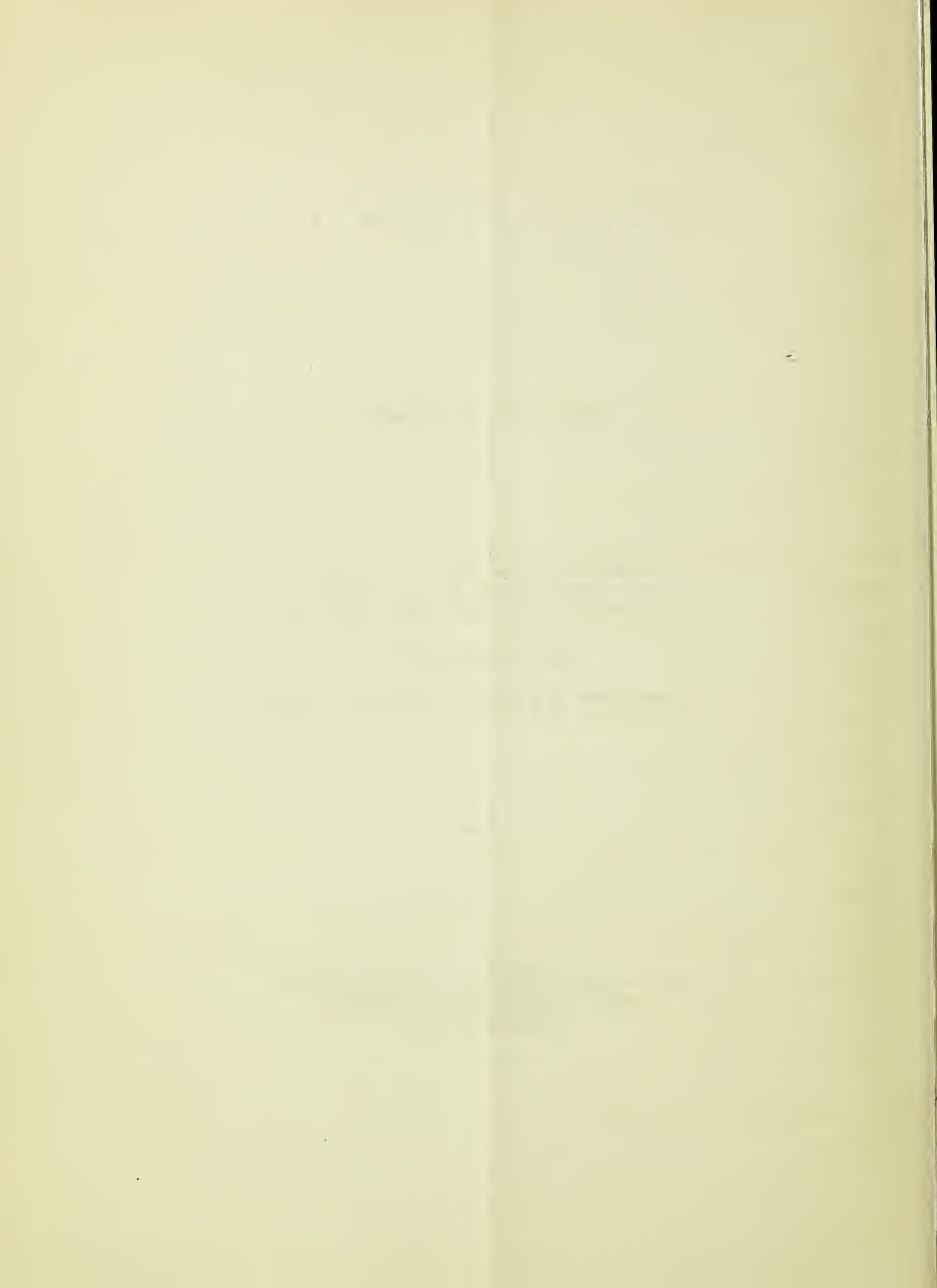
Broadcast No. 29 in a series  
of discussions of soil con-  
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

November 12, 1938 6:00-6:15 p.m.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

In southeastern Ohio, in the sharply breaking hills where autumn colors paint a panorama of unbelievable beauty, lives a quiet little community of 14 farm families. Here, where a meandering brook meets Seneca Fork of Wills Creek, the little town of Calais was born in 1803. For a hundred years it was a thriving village. But in 1916, came flood...

SOUND: Flood waters, shouts and shrieks, continuing through...

GOODHART

The water's rising every minute. We'll have to get out.

BILL

Can't stay much longer! Mother's already out--but what about the furniture and things?

GOODHART

Leave things where they are, Bill. We'll just have to go!

BILL

They're sure gonna be ruined. Mother's taking it pretty hard, too.

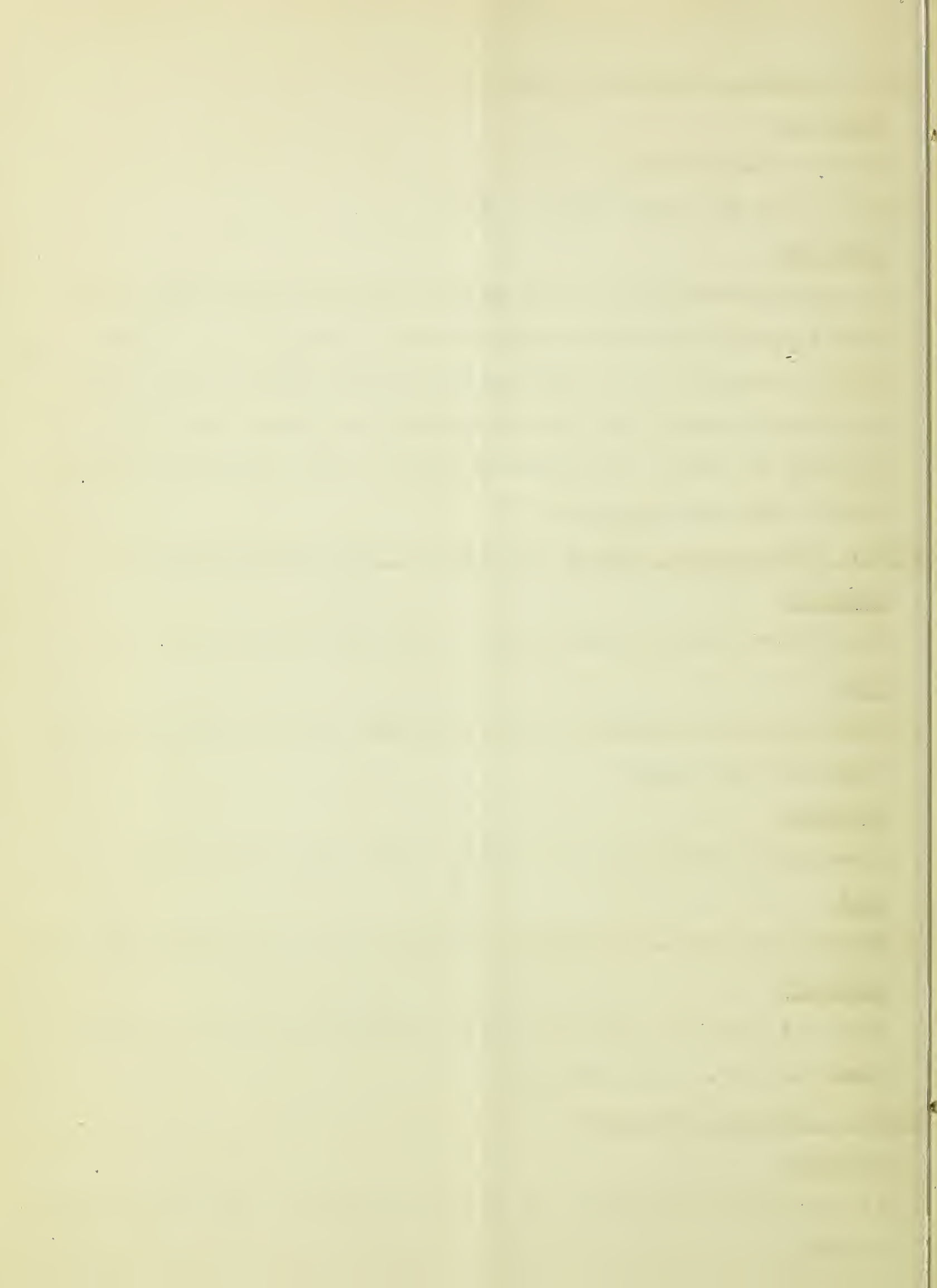
GOODHART

Come on! Ain't no time to waste. We'll have to go over and get Aunt Margaret.....(fading out)

SOUND: Splashing in water.

GOODHART

It ain't over waist deep. I wish we'd got Aunt Margaret out first, though.



BILL

Gosh! This water's cold. I hope we can wade all the way. If we hafta swim...

GOODHART

Yeah, if we hafta swim, what'll we do with Aunt Margaret? I'm none too stout, you know.

BILL

I dunno. C...c'mon, Dad. I think we can make it. If we d'don't f'freeze to death....here we are. Gosh, Dad! The water's in her house! Maybe she's....drowned.

SOUND: They hammer on door.

GOODHART (calling)

Aunt Margaret! Aunt Margaret!....she may be dead. Hore! Give me a hand, Bill, the door's swelled shut.

SOUND: Door gives, and they wade into house.

BILL (calling)

Aunt Margaret!

MARGARET (faintly)

Yes, in here.

SOUND: Men wading through water.

GOODHART

Oh, Margaret! Are you all right?

MARGARET

Yes, John, I think I'm all right--but I'm awfully cold. I had to get up on the bed to keep dry and warm, but the mattress is getting wet. Can we get out?





BILL

I think so, Aunt Margaret, but you'll have to wade deep water.

GOODHART

Here, we'll carry you. Put your arms around our necks. Gosh, Margaret, I'm sorry we didn't come sooner--but the water came up quick in the night.

BILL

We'll hafta hurry. Is there anything you want to take?

MARGARET

Here, this bag, Willie. 'Twon't hurt to get it wet. I don't care about anything else.

BILL

All right, let's go. Hold tight to us, Aunt Margaret. We can wade it, I think, and it ain't far to the shallow water.

MARGARET

Oh, if I ever live through this, I'm...I'm...never coming back.

SOUND: Splashing...

BILL (coughing and spluttering)

Wow, my foot slipped. Hold tight, Aunt Margaret. Here we go again.

SOUND: Splashing and slopping, fading...

ORGAN: OLD MAN RIVER.



ANNOUNCER

The flood of 1916 was a milestone in the history of Calais, Ohio... a village that had once quartered shoemakers, blacksmiths, doctors, cabinet shops, tobacco packing houses, stores, lodges, saloons. But people refused to move back into the mud-soaked cabins they had evacuated. One by one, they moved to neighboring towns, Summerfield, Woodsfield, Quaker City. Like Aunt Margaret, they never went back. Today, where the brook gurgles into Seneca Fork, there stands a single, lonely store. In this tiny store, where he sells everything from buttons to bacon, from hoarhound candy to horse collars, John Goodhart recalls when Calais was in flower...

GOODHART

Yes, Calais used to be a better town than Quaker City. Every house was occupied and they was building more. We had street lights, a town whistle...

JOE

...and the floods started coming more often.

GOODHART

That's it. Why, the creek's been all over the valley here ten, twelve times this year.

JOE

But it looks like you'd have done something about the floods...if they were ruining your town.

GOODHART

Hey? Oh, done something? Why, son, there wasn't nothing much we could do.

JOE

But something caused the floods--you didn't use to have them like that.



GOODHART

No, son, and them hills up there that you see didn't use to have them gullies, neither. Why, I can remember when all those hills were covered with trees. But they cut 'em down--cut 'em down and rolled 'em into the hollers and burned 'em. Finest walnut, white oak, and poplar you ever saw.

JOE

Golly, that's a shame, why...

GOODHART

When they plowed them steep hills, my boy, and started to raising tobacco, they ruint this valley. It was one of the widest, nicest valleys around here. Growed fine crops--100 bushel of corn to the acre. But the more timber they cleared, the more floods they had, and they got to drowning out the crops here in the valley.

JOE

Didn't you ever have any floods before that?

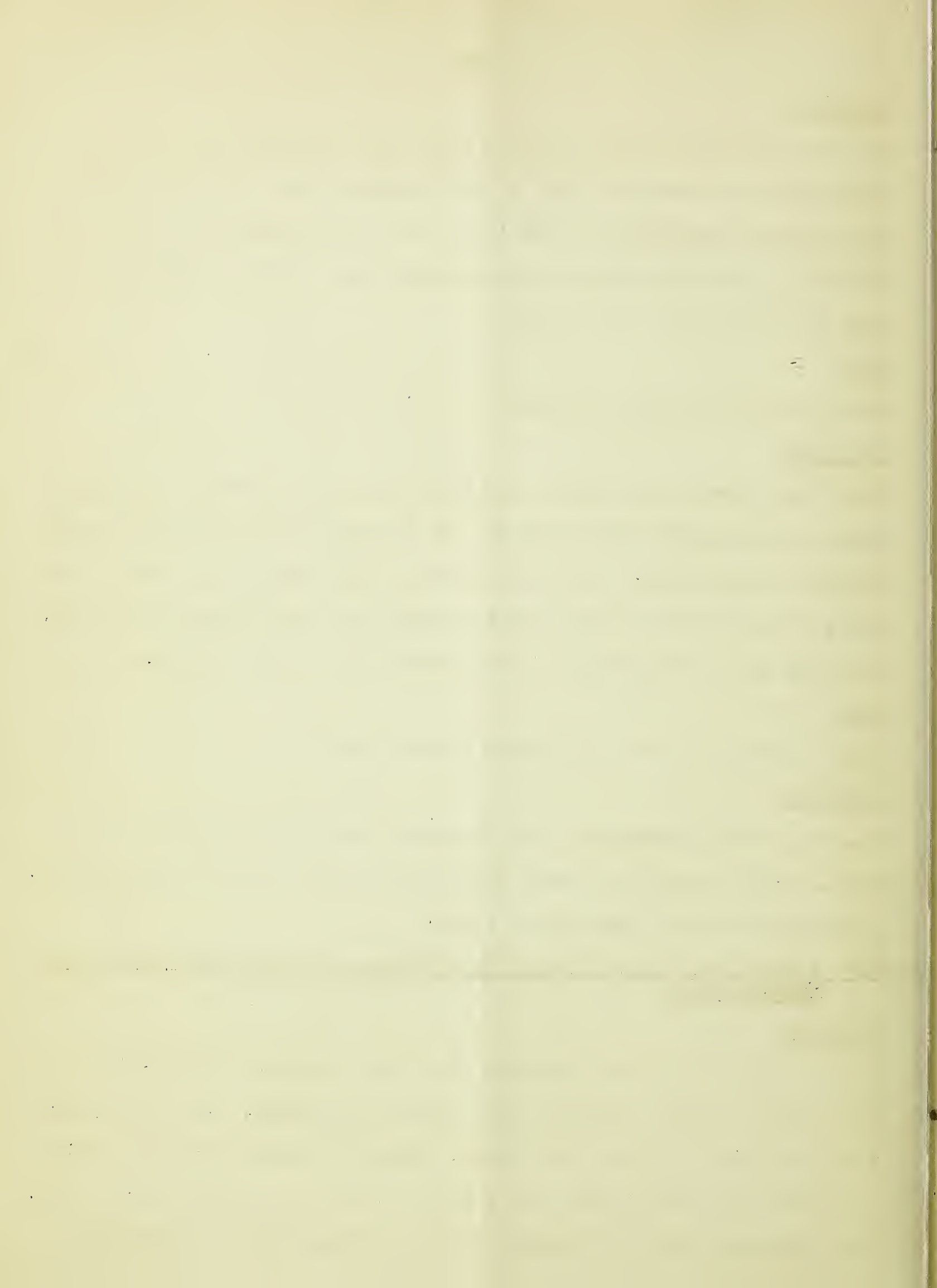
GOODHART

Oh, yes, little freshets, but the water was clear and didn't do much. Now in the last forty years or so, the water's been dirtier. Lotsa silt in it. Come here, son...

SOUND: Walking on wooden floor, door opens, and they step down four wooden steps.

GOODHART

See how high this store building is above ground? Thirty-five years ago, I built it three feet above the ground. In a few years I had to raise it three more feet. Then the silt filled in again, and it's just four years ago, I had to raise it another three feet. Must be about seven or eight feet it's filled in, in about 35 years.





JOE

You don't mean that this whole valley has filled up that much--  
clear across!

GOODHART (chuckling)

Sure, son, it'd have to. The valley's just as level as a floor.

JOE

Why, it doesn't seem possible! You can step across that creek...  
I wonder...how many millions of tons of soil...

GOODHART

Hey? Oh, it'd take a lot of dirt, but I know it's done it. Why,  
right there beside the house, we dug a cistern a few years ago.  
Ten feet deep and we struck an old post and had to saw it off in  
the bottom of the cistern. And there was charcoal and that sorta  
stuff down in there. Now it's filled in so's the water's getting  
into the cistern when it floods...

JOE

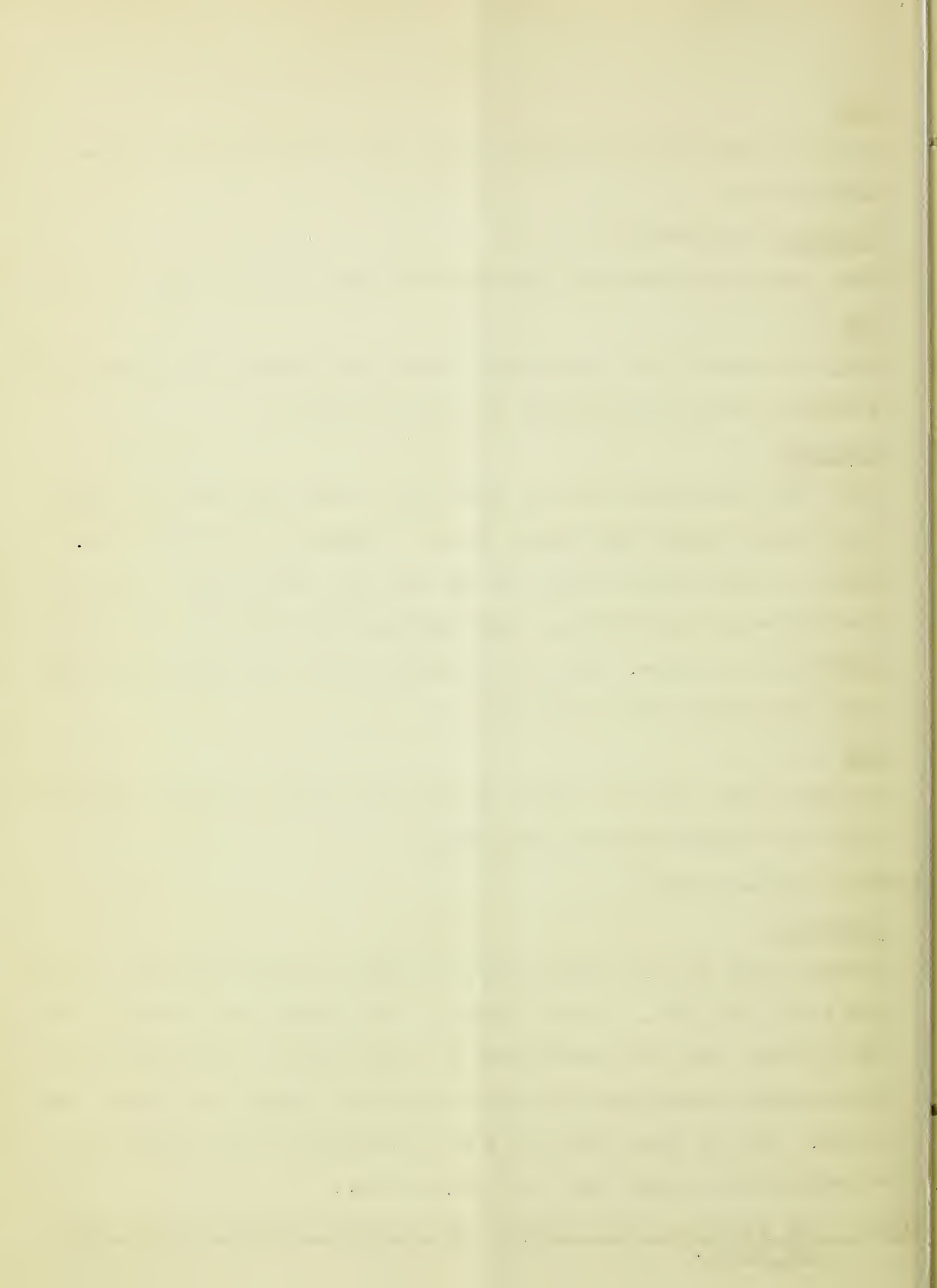
Ten feet down, and you struck an old fence post...buried with the  
soil that washed from the hillsides.

ORGAN: OLD MAN RIVER.

ANNOUNCER

Calais, with its one lonely store is only a landmark today. Stores  
and homes are gone. An old church, a few shacks are crumbling to  
the ground. But the countryside is still there, a beautiful and  
picturesque countryside in spite of gullied slopes and silted low-  
lands. The few farm families still remaining in the valley hope  
to rebuild the lands that they call home...

SOUND: Car rattling down crushed rock highway, brakes applied, and  
car stops.





JOE

Hi, Mr. Steven!

STEVEN

Hello, Joe. Whoa, King, whoa!

SOUND: Horses stopping, harness clinking.

JOE

What ya doing, John?

STEVEN

Aw, trying to clean the mud out of this drain. Fills in every time it rains. Soil comes down off that slope there. Come over the fence, Joe, and sit awhile. I'm tired fussing with this mud.

JOE

No wonder.....what are you going to do about it?

STEVEN

Well, you're a soil conservation man. What's your idea?

JOE

Of course, John, you've got to control the erosion on the hillsides, if you want to keep the silt out of this drainage ditch.

STEVEN

Well, I started strip cropping this year. See those fields up yonder?

JOE

That's the right idea. Strip cropping will help to control erosion on the hills. A lot of folks around here have started strip cropping since we put in the Seneca Fork project. But strip cropping alone won't be the answer. These hills are steep. Good grass or forest is the answer to a lot of your erosion and silting problems.



STEVEN

I know it. Why, an old man--he lived up around the hill there. He told me himself that he grew 35 corn crops in a row on the same land. Never did rotate the crops. That's the kind of farming that causes the washing.

JOE

You're right, John. This valley will never be productive again until you do something to keep the water off the bottomland. That means keeping the rain where it falls. You've got to keep corn off the hills, or you won't have any hills left.

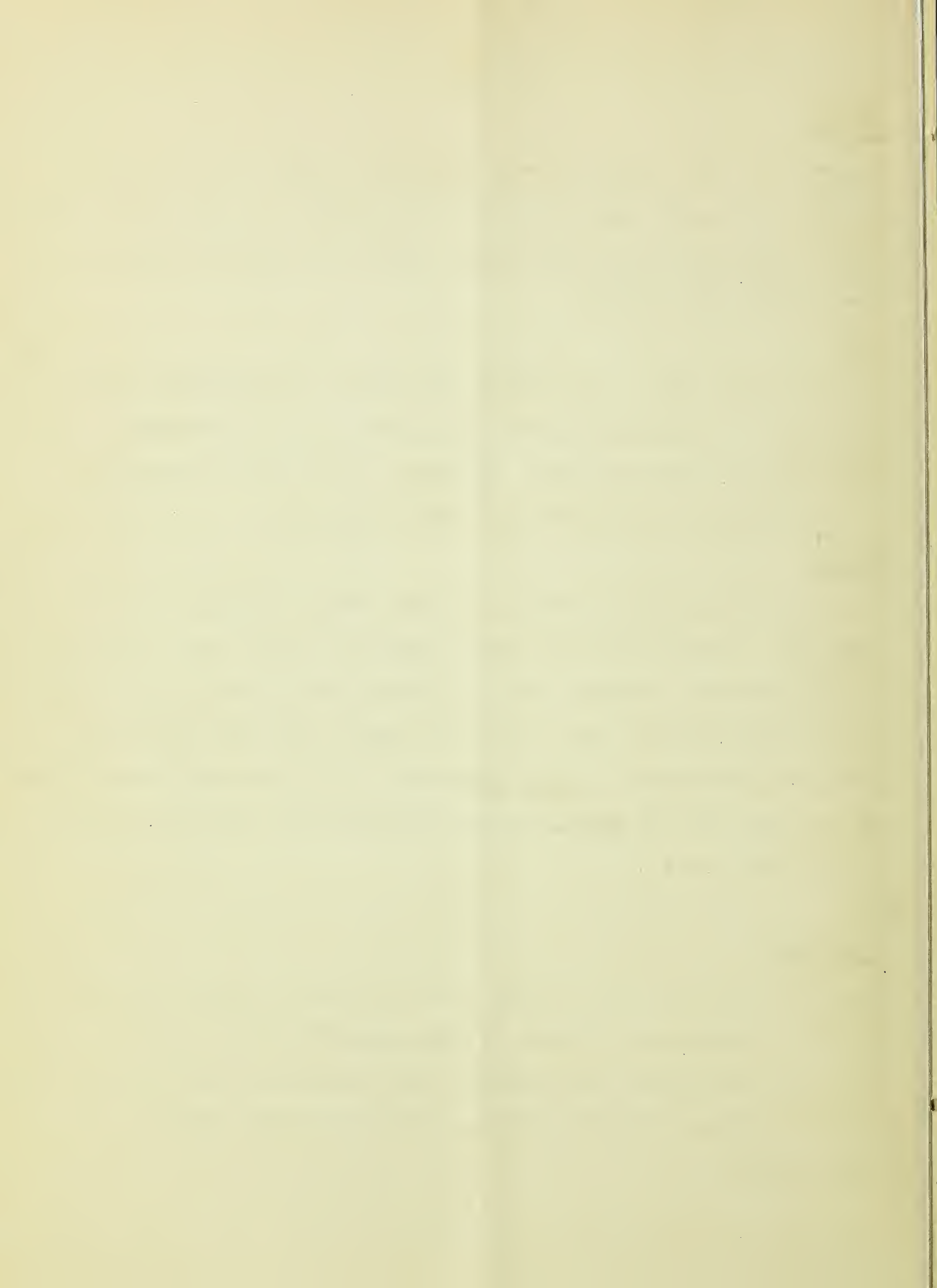
STEVEN

No hills left...and no people. I know, Joe. We've got to work together. Look at Calais...once a thriving little town where me and my neighbors traded. Look at these gullied hills, and you'll see the connection. Just because we didn't farm the hills the right way, Calais is a ghost town--and the creeks run red--red with silt. That silt is blood, and the hillsides are bleeding....but we'll fight back!

ORGAN:

ANNOUNCER

This story of the fall of Calais, and of the determined efforts of the few remaining farmers in this peaceful valley to bring back its agricultural prosperity, came through the Soil Conservation Service, in Dayton, Ohio...and here is Gene Charles, of that office.



CHARLES

Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_. So far as the rest of the story of Calais, Ohio, is concerned, well, let's ask Joe Dougherty to help us write the modern chapter. Joe is soil conservationist for the Seneca Fork project of the Soil Conservation Service, with headquarters at Cambridge. The Seneca Fork project takes in this valley around Calais, so Joe ought to be the lad to tell us what's next in the story.

DOUGHERTY

Well, Gene, I think Mr. Steven sounded the keynote of the modern chapter. The farmers around there have become very much interested in soil conservation, and they're going to put a stop to those "bleeding hillsides," as Mr. Steven called them.

CHARLES

Before we go any farther, Joe, don't you think it would be a good idea to tell us a little about just how serious soil erosion is in the Seneca Fork project?

DOUGHERTY

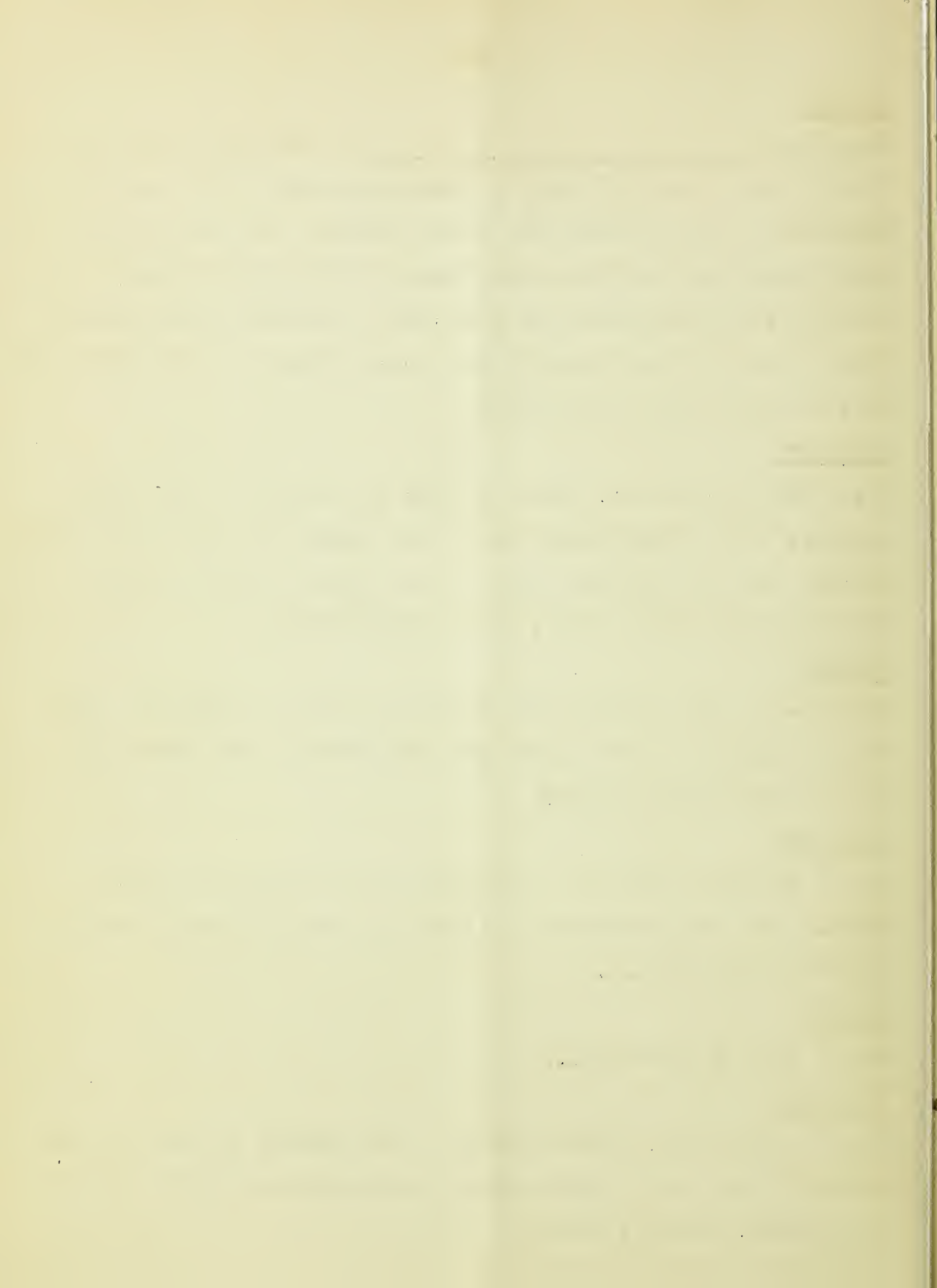
Yes, I do, Gene, and it's a lot more serious than most farmers think. Our surveys show that all of the topsoil is gone from 44 percent of the area....

CHARLES

Whew! That is startling...

DOUGHERTY

And that isn't all. Three-fourths of the topsoil is gone from 30 percent of the area, and 10 percent of the area has lost half of the topsoil. Shall I go on?





CHARLES

No....I think that is enough for one dose. But as you say, the farmers are doing something about it.

DOUGHERTY

Yes, they are. One thing about the project that might be worth mentioning, is that it has a dual purpose--not only to demonstrate soil conservation methods, but to keep silt out of Seneca Lake. You know, the Muskingum Conservancy District has a mighty big investment in the Senecaville Dam. No one is going to carry the dam away, but a silted-up reservoir can be just as worthless as though someone had hauled it off.

CHARLES

There's another point about the work of the project, and that is flood control.

DOUGHERTY

Good point, Gene. Yes, we figure soil and water conservation work on the headwater farms will help cut down the load of both silt and water on the dams and other major flood control structures on the larger streams.

CHARLES

Incidentally, that point is brought out quite clearly in the U. S. Department of Agriculture bulletin, "Conservation Farming Practices and Flood Control." If some of the earlier settlers around Calais had had that bulletin, perhaps the little city wouldn't have met its unhappy ending.

ANNOUNCER

Pardon me, Gene, but are copies of the flood control bulletin available for public distribution?





CHARLES

Yes, they are, and I'll repeat that title. "Conservation Farming Practices and Flood Control." Copies may be secured by dropping a letter or a penny postcard to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio.

ANNOUNCER

Fine, and to make doubly sure, I'm going to repeat that: If you would like a copy of the bulletin, write to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. Thanks, Gene, and pardon me for interrupting.

CHARLES

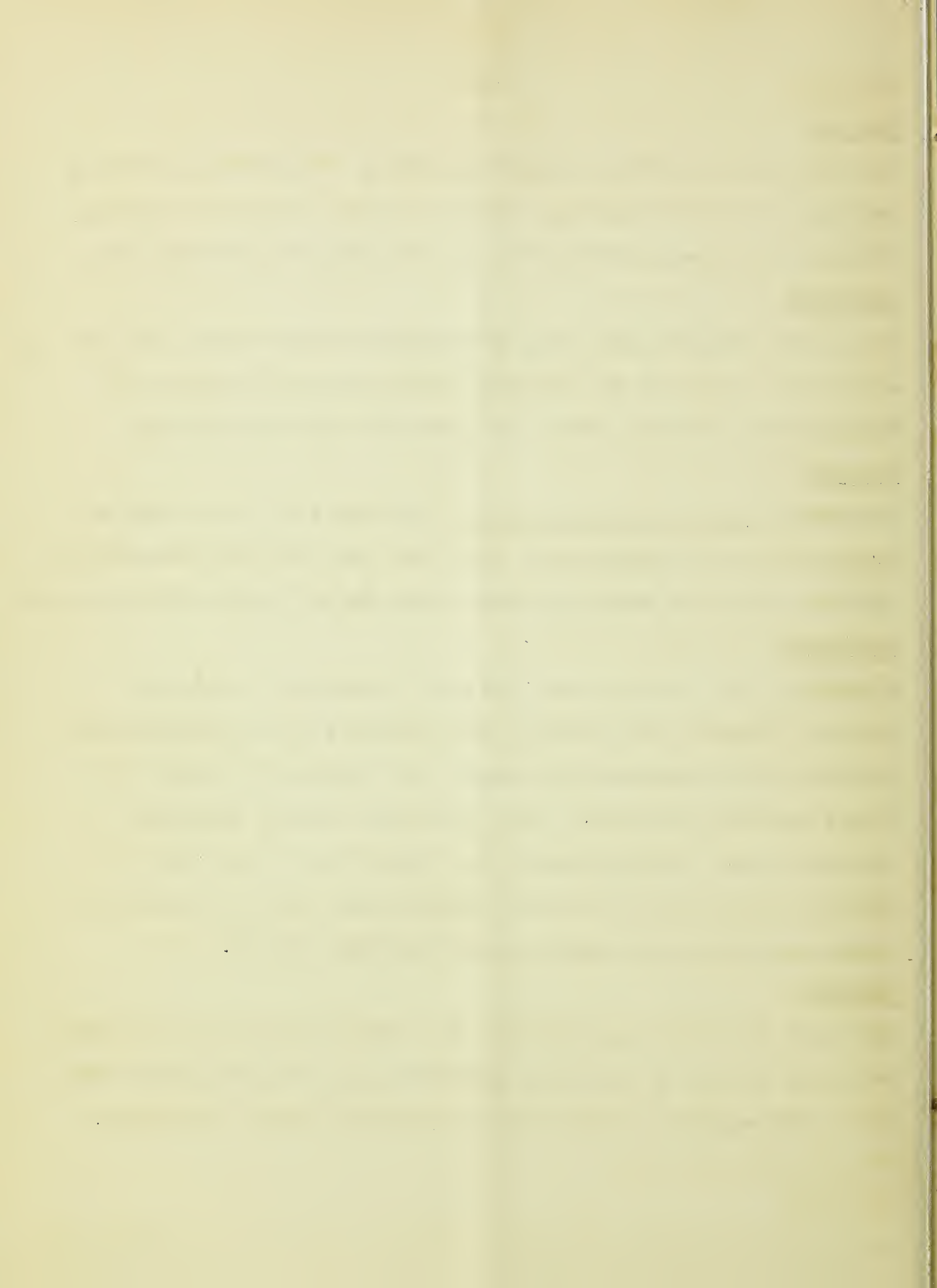
Certainly, \_\_\_\_\_, and now I'll go on with my inquisition of Joe Dougherty. Joe, what are the soil conservation practices that are being put into effect in the Seneca Fork project?

DOUGHERTY

I won't go into detail, Gene, but, in a nutshell, here's the picture: Farmers are setting aside certain fields for permanent pasture, to be maintained by proper soil amendments as well as proper grazing practices. Those practices include limiting grazing to late spring, summer, and early fall months; the rotation of pastures to prevent overgrazing; and the clipping or mowing of pastures to control weeds and wild grasses.

CHARLES

How about the cultivated fields? You don't need to mention strip cropping, because I know from what I've seen of southeastern Ohio that strip cropping is gaining in popularity almost everywhere.



DOUGHERTY

Nevertheless, it's hard to skip by strip cropping, because it is so important. But there are other angles. For example, lands too steep for cultivation or for pasture are being put into protected woodlands. On cultivated fields, we find that contour cultivation is essential. Most of the farmers are using better crop rotations, too, either a 4- or a 5-year rotation including at least two years of meadow. The fields are being limed and fertilized. But as I warned you, Gene, we can't go into all of the practices, because each farm presents a different problem. Perhaps I can sum it up by saying that square farming in that round country of southeastern Ohio is going out....farmers there have the foresight and the courage to meet their soil erosion problems--and they're doing it.

CHARLES

That's an encouraging report, Joe Dougherty, and thanks a lot for your help in telling of the fall of Calais and the rise of soil conservation in the Seneca Lake drainage area. And, of course, we want to thank Mr. Goodhard and Mr. Steven for their splendid help in preparing this story. And I'd be awfully much obliged to \_\_\_\_\_ if he would tell you that...

ANNOUNCER

Copies of the bulletin, "Conservation Farming Practices and Flood Control," may be secured by writing to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. Next week, reforestation in Muskegon County, Michigan...

SOUND: Thunder and rain.

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away is an educational presentation of the Nation's Station.

